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FM AMEMBASSY BAKU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1417  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNOSC/ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY COOPERATION IN EUROPE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 001466

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/06/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [AJ](#)  
SUBJECT: VOTING IN AZERBAIJAN'S OCTOBER 6 PARTIAL MUNICIPAL  
ELECTIONS RELATIVELY SMOOTH

REF: A. BAKU 1019

[1](#)B. BAKU 1444

Classified By: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JOAN POLASCHIK PER 1.4(B,  
D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: As of 1900 hours on October 6, Azerbaijan's partial Municipal Elections have passed relatively smoothly, with reports of minor procedural problems that the local election officials quickly corrected. Our Embassy observers noticed many cases of family voting, and some cases of attempted voter persuasion or intimidation. One polling station has proven to be particularly problematic, although some of the irregularities were addressed in an inspection by the local Constituency Election Commission (ConEC), and the Central Election Commission (CEC) continues to actively monitor procedures there. Now that polls are closed, the true test will be the vote counting and tabulation process, which Embassy observers will monitor. Post will report in greater detail septel. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) As of 1900 hours local time, Azerbaijan's partial Municipal Elections have passed in a low-key and orderly fashion. Elections (mostly re-runs of 2004 races that were canceled due to fraud and irregularities) were held in cities and villages throughout the country, although no municipal seats in the capital were up for grabs. Contrary to previous practice, the GOAJ remained open for business on election day. The CEC had previously predicted a voter turn-out of 20 to 45 percent (see ref a), and according to Embassy observers, actual turn-out appeared to be closer to 20 percent.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Our 14 Embassy observers throughout the country reported that voting occurred without any major problems. Most problems we noticed were minor and procedural, the most common of which was the provision of pre-stamped envelopes. (Note: According to the Azerbaijani Election Code, ballots may be pre-stamped, but envelopes may not). Most PECs stopped pre-stamping envelopes once observers called this error to their attention. In addition, some observers noted that the ballot boxes were not sufficiently sealed, and there were many cases of possible ballot-stuffing (envelopes in the transparent ballot boxes that looked as if they may have been inserted in clumps rather than one at a time), although observers did not notice anyone in the process of stuffing. Other procedural problems were witnessed during the opening of polling stations. A few observers reported that the PECs did not count ballots in the presence of observers, and one polling station in Nakhchivan was opened 30 minutes late.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Embassy observers also witnessed family voting (more than one person in the voting booth at a time) at polling stations throughout the country. In some locations, observers noted groupings of two to five signatures on the voter lists that were clearly written by the same hand - indication that

family voting and proxy voting (a voter voting on behalf of another person) had taken place while Embassy observers were not present. Most instances of observed family voting involved a husband assisting a wife, or a younger family member helping an elderly relative to vote. Some of these voters purported to be illiterate, while others did not indicate why they needed assistance.

15. (C) At one polling station in ConEC 52 (Guba), the Chair of the Village Council was clearly attempting to persuade voters to vote for a certain candidate. He then proceeded to follow Embassy observers to several other polling stations. We subsequently notified the CEC of the problem, and the CEC is now investigating the matter. In a polling station in Nakhchivan, a group of approximately 10 police officers was loitering inside the polling station. In several locations in ConEC 45 (Absheron), there were many unidentified persons inside the polling stations, in some cases, blocking the entrances so that voters had to push through the group in order to vote.

16. (C) So far, only one observed polling station has proven to be particularly problematic - polling station nine in Absheron. The PEC chair would not allow Embassy observers to view the signed voters list until a CEC official intervened. Once observers were able to view the list, they noted that all signatures (over 100 at that point) appeared to have been written by about three different hands. Observers also noticed open voting and family voting at that location. The same observers returned to polling station nine after members of the local ConEC had come through to inspect, and noted that these practices had improved, although other problems had developed - such as the presence of a "municipal" cameraman inside the polling station. After we notified the CEC of the problems at this polling station, the CEC has been

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actively engaged in addressing these problems.

17. (C) COMMENT: Now that polls are closed, the true test will be the vote-counting and tabulation process. Embassy observers will stay throughout the process. We will compare notes with other international observers and with the two OSCE/ODIHR technical experts who were brought in to gauge the overall election climate, and will report further information septel.  
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